# **Minneapolis Planning Department**

350 South Fifth Street, Room 210 Minneapolis, MN 55415-1385 (612) 673-2597 Phone (612) 673-2526 Fax (612) 673-2157 TDD

## **MEMORANDUM**

DATE: September 19, 2002

TO: Minneapolis Planning Commission Committee of the Whole

FROM: Carrie Flack, Planning Department

RE: Corcoran Midtown Revival Plan

#### **PURPOSE**

The Corcoran Neighborhood Organization has spent the past few years conducting numerous community-based planning efforts along Lake Street from Cedar Avenue to Hiawatha Avenue. The culmination of which is the Corcoran Midtown Revival Plan. In June 2002 the Corcoran Neighborhood Organization (CNO) approved the Midtown Revival Plan and requested that the City of Minneapolis Planning Department review the plan and recommend it for adoption by the Planning Commission and City Council.

## **SUMMARY**

The following is a much abbreviated summary of the recommendations within the Corcoran Midtown Revival Plan. Generally the plan is consistent with many policies, guidelines, and requirements set forth in *The Minneapolis Plan* and the *Zoning Ordinance* such as promoting urban design, pedestrian amenities, sustainability, etc. The Corcoran Midtown Revival Plan is a vision that is based on a series of themes as well as refined land use development patterns for key areas within the neighborhood.

#### Basic Premises/Rules of Interpretation

The plan is not a master plan for the entire Corcoran neighborhood, although principles within the plan may apply elsewhere in the neighborhood. The plan presents a preferred development pattern for the Midtown Revival Area. The concept is based on an ideal vision, one that will not happen in a short period of time but rather an extended period of growth and change that would occur over a 10 to 20 year time horizon.

The plan is a model of what "should" be built; it should not be interpreted as what "will" be built. The elements within the plan are intended to be used to frame regulatory tools, to convey what is desired in public improvements, to focus community volunteers toward a common objective, or to convey a desired development pattern to prospective developers, investors or property owners.

## Elements of the Plan

Ultimately, the Midtown Revival Area should reflect the following qualities:

- A distinctively urban neighborhood
- A clear orientation towards the pedestrian and transit
- A commitment to public spaces
- A unique sense of place and identity
- An active street life

## Plan Recommendations for Land Use Development

The land use development patterns and recommendations are described below. However, they are illustrated and discussed in a more detailed manner within the plan.

<u>Lake Street Residential</u> – Along Lake Street between Cedar Avenue and 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue the street should be an active street with retail uses at street level and generally two to three stories of housing above. An urban character suggests that Lake Street be framed by mixed-use buildings with total building heights of three to four stories. The intersection of Cedar and Lake should be four stories minimum.

<u>Public Market and Plaza</u> – Along Lake Street between 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Hiawatha the street should transition to the mixed-use buildings between Cedar Avenue and 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue by providing a higher density residential and strong public and retail use near the LRT station. The Public Market idea is proposed on the Edison/PPL site near the future LRT station. The Public Market is an enclosed building open year round with individual entrepreneurs located in small spaces who sell specialized goods, fresh foods and produce. It also might include local arts and crafts. Apartments are proposed adjacent to Hiawatha at a higher density than the mixed-use buildings with a building height of six stories.

Infill Housing — Rowhouses, townhomes, and lane housing are illustrated along Cedar Avenue and Hiawatha as a long-term redevelopment potential. Infill housing is illustrated in the concept plans as filling vacant or underutilized parcels near the LRT line, creating a transition between the more intense uses on Lake Street and the more established residential areas south of Lake Street. This might be accomplished through renovation of larger single family homes to duplexes, redeveloping dilapidated or blighted single family units with two, three or four unit structures or permitting apartments as accessory structures (i.e. carriage homes). Housing along Cedar Avenue as illustrated in the plan serves as a guide, but is not a priority project.

## Plan Recommendations for Themes

The themes and recommendations are described below. However, they are illustrated and discussed in a more detailed manner within the plan.

<u>Strolling Lake Street</u> – Strolling Lake Street is about making Lake Street a more pedestrian friendly environment by enhancing the physical streetscape and establishing a more pedestrian and transit oriented land use pattern. The desired development pattern is one that presents a building façade that spans the majority if

not the entire lot frontage. Any break in a building façade lot frontage should be for mid-block pedestrian connections or public plazas. The facade should include windows and doors/entrances to retail shops and services. Streetscape enhancements, such as pedestrian scale lighting, landscaping and street furniture, should be included in future developments along Lake Street.

<u>Plaza Streets</u> – The concept of "plaza streets" mixes pedestrian movement with autos in a more pedestrian friendly environment. The concept offers a unique identity for the Corcoran neighborhood. Plaza streets function like a hallway leading from one room (Lake Street) to another room (the Corcoran neighborhood). Plaza streets may include alternative paving patterns extending from Lake Street approximately the depth of the commercial development and its associated parking areas. The streets should provide parking for Lake Street commercial patrons, smooth traffic flow and a comfortable pedestrian environment. Plaza streets occur at all streets that extend from Lake Street into the neighborhood.

<u>Parking Strategies</u> – The intent of the plan is to develop strategies to address parking quantities (especially associated with new development) to control commuter parking associated with LRT, and to address the image that parking facilities impose on the neighborhood. Parking strategies appropriate to Corcoran include:

- Orchard parking requiring additional interior landscaping
- Structured parking parking should be encouraged vertically above ground or below ground
- Remote parking permitting developments to meet parking needs off site
- Parking maximums placing limits on the amount of parking a particular use can provide rather than requiring a specific number of parking spaces
- Underground parking parking should be encouraged under developments especially for office and residential uses
- Shared parking development with complementary uses can share parking
- Car sharing a program initiated by a for-profit company to share cars thus reducing the number of cars on the street
- Critical areas parking a program through the City that issues permits for parking in a neighborhood with parking shortages

<u>Public Green Spaces</u> – The Midtown Revival Plan suggests open space along the LRT tracks running south from Lake Street at least to 32<sup>nd</sup> street. While located in the back yards of residential units, landscaping and low level lighting should be designed to provide a clear and yet transparent distinction between public and private realm. This corridor provides a connection between the LRT station and the Corcoran Neighborhood. The plan also suggests a larger open space between 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue in the front yards of higher density residential units that would also serve as the residential units "back yards".

<u>Transit-Oriented Development</u> – The Midtown Revival Plan is supportive of transit oriented development land use patterns. Generally development should be higher density nearest the LRT station but should not exceed six story building heights and should step down in height as development approaches the existing lower density

residential development south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and 32<sup>nd</sup> Street or as development moves further from the LRT station.

<u>Hi-Lake Loop</u> – The Hi-Lake Loop follows 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 32<sup>nd</sup> Street. It provides connections to the Longfellow neighborhood to the east and to the Midtown Greenway to the north. It is a pedestrian and bicycle oriented route that still accommodates vehicles, facilitates non-auto circulation, and establishes a boundary composed of enhanced streetscapes that marks a more intensely developed core of transit oriented development. Traffic calming initiatives should attempt to slow and control traffic as it travels through the neighborhood but not completely close it off from moving through the neighborhood. Being able to move through the neighborhood can be enhanced with pedestrian and bicycle corridors and strategically located traffic calming improvements such as changes in pavement patterns, variations in street widths, traffic circles, raised pedestrian crossings (not speed bumps) and other traffic calming measures.

<u>Blending Density</u> – A key principle of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is compact or intense development patterns within a half-mile of a multi-modal transit hub. The plan supports findings that six stories is a desirable building height closest to the station south of Lake Street (the Edison/PPL site) transitioning to four story buildings along Lake Street. Through creative design, new higher density housing along Lake Street can blend with the character of established neighborhoods and lower density single family residential areas located south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

Connecting Institutions to Lake Street –The Midtown Revival Plan establishes connections to South High via a "plaza street" (20<sup>th</sup> Avenue) extending from Lake Street to the athletic field. A grand entrance to the athletic field should be established at 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue by opening the bleachers and creating a new corridor directed to South High. Additionally, South High has been described as a rather utilitarian structure with minimal windows leading to an impression of being closed to the neighborhood. In this plan, a plaza street along 31<sup>st</sup> Street serves as an area for student projects exhibits, recognition of significant achievements or tributes to alumni who have made significant contributions to the school and community.

Arts Center – An arts related facility would add to the diversity of activities and entertainment venues in the Corcoran neighborhood. Such a facility might feature live theatre, dance, music, and other live performance productions, visual arts exhibits, and areas for concessions, rehearsals, workshops, classes, and other functions. In the master plan, a possible location for the arts center is within the public market area, nearest the LRT station or as a possible street front use along Lake Street. Recent planning explorations have illustrated an arts center fronting Lake Street associated with the reconfiguration of the South High Campus and the addition of a Tech Center.

Note: Since the drafting of this document, an arts related facility has materialized on Lake Street between Bloomington Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue that may address the need for this type of use in the area. Two such uses so closely together might have a detrimental impact rather than a positive impact on the neighborhood.

<u>Supported/Targeted Development Quantities</u> – The plan illustrates areas anticipated for new housing redevelopment over the next 10 to 20 years. Housing along Cedar Avenue as illustrated in the plan serves as a guide, but it is not a priority project. Development projections according to development locations are illustrated below and based on principles of TOD including street level retail along Lake Street, a public market, and a diversity of higher density housing with the highest density (six stories) nearest the LRT station.

Development Location	Housing Units	Commercial Square Feet
Cedar and Lake	55-60	20,000
Lake Street	145-150	40,000
Edison/PPL	215-220	10,000
TOTALS	415-430	70,000

#### ANALYSIS

As mentioned earlier, the Corcoran Midtown Revival Plan is generally consistent with *The Minneapolis Plan* and the *Zoning Ordinance*. In addition, the plan has incorporated concepts from the *Hi-Lake Station Area Plan* and the *East End Revival Report* for this area and is thus consistent with those plans as well.

The Corcoran Midtown Revival Plan incorporates the goals from the above mentioned documents to achieve a higher level of urban design that contributes to the vitality of the community. The plan expands on those goals through design policies that address building orientation, placement, height, massing, and use, integrating parking, accommodating pedestrian circulation, and encouraging mixed uses and transit oriented development. The plan also illustrates numerous examples and possibilities of how development can be accommodated in the neighborhood to meet those goals.

The plan makes several recommendations. The first, to amend *The Minneapolis Plan*, Land Use Policy Map 9-8 to incorporate the Midtown Revival Plan land uses. The second, to work with the city on a Transit Overlay District. Three, to encourage C2 or OR zoning for properties that would front onto Lake Street with the inclusion of a Transit Overlay District. The last recommendation is to encourage expansion of the Transit Overlay District to an area within ¼ to ½ mile of the LRT station area and incorporate provisions to allow infill housing in the form of accessory structures or carriage homes in the R2B districts. The following paragraphs address these recommendations.

The Minneapolis Plan is the City of Minneapolis's comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan analyzes trends in the city's population, economic growth, and neighborhood livability. It also proposes a vision for the physical development of the city and identifies steps that the city must take in order to achieve that vision. It does not discuss detailed neighborhood planning efforts. In addition, the Land Use Policy Map is intended to illustrate the general location and distribution of the various categories of land uses anticipated by the comprehensive plan policies over the life of the plan; it is not intended to provide the basis for rezones and other legislative and quasi-judicial

decisions, for which the decision makers must look to the comprehensive plan policies and various implementing regulations.

The Planning Department is also currently working on an amendment to *The Minneapolis Plan* for a Transit Station Areas (TSAs) feature. The purpose of identifying TSAs as a land use feature in *The Minneapolis Plan* is to emphasize that station areas represent unique opportunities and challenges that require special policy consideration. As such, TSAs call for tools that maximize potential community development benefits of transit while also strengthening and protecting the surrounding neighborhoods. The characteristics and policies for TSAs incorporates many of the concepts and issues discussed within the Midtown Revival Plan. Thus, the Midtown Revival Plan is also consistent with the TSAs feature in *The Minneapolis Plan* recently adopted by the City Council.

Based on the above discussion, no amendments to *The Minneapolis Plan* are necessary as recommended in the Midtown Revival Plan. However, upon adoption, the Midtown Revival Plan will serve as an adjunct to *The Minneapolis Plan* and will provide an additional implementation tool by which development proposals will be reviewed against.

The Midtown Revival Plan also recommends that the City encourage C2 or OR zoning in the area. The C2 zoning classification allows for auto-related uses which are not recommended in the plan and thus may be an inappropriate zoning classification. The C3A zoning district was not mentioned in the plan and may be a more appropriate zoning classification for this area based on the plan's proposed land use development pattern. The City generally evaluates the rezoning of property based on individual development proposals. The recommendation of that rezoning is reviewed against numerous approved documents. Currently, the existing zoning in this area would accommodate much of the plan's intentions through the use of various methods in the *Zoning Ordinance* such as planned unit developments, density bonuses, variances etc. However, in the instances where the current zoning classification is not appropriate, staff will work towards ensuring that rezonings in the Corcoran neighborhood are consistent with the intent of the recommended land use development patterns within the plan.

There are additional recommendations made for the Corcoran neighborhood to begin implementing the Midtown Revival Plan. Those include pursuing public improvement projects, focusing on the redevelopment at Cedar Avenue and Lake Street consistent with the plan, seeking development proposals for the Citgo site for redevelopment consistent with the plan, implementing the public market concept, and advocating for the redevelopment of 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Hiawatha and Lake Redevelopment Plan approved along Lake Street in this area emphasizes mixed-use development, highest intensity redevelopment nearest the transit station, and the reinforcement of mixed-use commercial corridors as identified in *The Minneapolis Plan*. This redevelopment plan may provide a mechanism by which to promote initiating some of those projects.

## APPLICABLE POLICIES FROM THE MINNEAPOLIS PLAN

There are numerous policies and implementation steps set forth in *The Minneapolis Plan* in which the Midtown Revival Plan is in compliance. To list them all individually would be

quite lengthy. Therefore, the following are the overall goals the Midtown Revival Plan is in compliance with.

The third goal set forth in *The Minneapolis Plan* is to, "Strengthen the participation of all citizens, including children, in the economic and civic life of the community."

The fourth goal set forth in *The Minneapolis Plan* is to "Create strong vital commercial corridors city-wide through mixed use development, including a variety of businesses and creative housing."

The sixth goal set forth in *The Minneapolis Plan* is to "Preserve, enhance and create sustainable natural and historic environment city-wide."

The Minneapolis Plan designates Lake Street as a "commercial corridor" through the Midtown Revival Area. Commercial Corridors are streets that are available for development including more intensive commercial and high traffic activities. buildings and structures on these streets are generally similar to traditional commercial storefronts and the siting and massing of new structures should respect this typology. These corridors must balance both pedestrian and automobile orientation in their design and development. The corridors support all types of commercial uses, with some light industrial and high density residential uses as well. While the character of these streets is commercial, residential areas are nearby and impacts from commercial uses must be mitigated as appropriate. Some uses may not be allowed on commercial corridors because the impacts and the repercussions these impacts have on nearby residential areas. Commercial uses on these streets will be supported insofar as they do not create excessive negative impacts relative to the location and its surroundings. These impacts include consequences such as fumes, noise, significant automobile traffic, late night activity, and negative aesthetics that may be associated with businesses such as major automobile repair and sales. The streets that form the spine of these corridors carry large traffic volumes and must balance significant vehicular through traffic capacity with automobile and pedestrian access to commercial property.

The Minneapolis Plan designates Cedar Avenue as a "community corridor" through the Midtown Revival Area. Community Corridors are locations that support new residential development at medium density and increased housing diversity in neighborhoods. They support limited commercial uses, which are measured against their impacts on residential character, such as the production of fumes or noise or negative aesthetics. Design and development along these streets is oriented towards the pedestrian experience. The streets, which form the spine of the community corridors, carry fairly high volumes of traffic, but must balance vehicular travel against residential quality of life. The streets are also important identifiers and travel routes for neighborhood residents and pass-through traffic.

**RECOMMENDATION** – As amended September 20, 2002 per Committee of the Whole Meeting September 19, 2002

The Corcoran Midtown Revival Plan is generally consistent with the comprehensive plan and is recommended for approval recognizing that an amendment to *The Minneapolis Plan* is not necessary and that all references to height restrictions are advisory.